

AEJ 2012 CONGRESS, OCTOBER 25-28, OFFIDA, ITALY : MEDIA FREEDOM REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

By William Horsley

William Horsley especially thanks for support on MF issues: Peter Kramer, Secretary-General; Christos Trikoukis, AEJ website manager; Celia Hampton, AEK-UK website manager; Krszysztof Bobinski, Polish section (editing and writing news and 2012 mini-survey); & contributing AEJ Sections

- 1) Campaigns, interventions, conferences and network events in 2011-2012. Areas & topics covered include Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, EU policies and “competences”; Turkey; Ukraine; AEJ website News and Archives on MF – many new items
- 2) In 2011-2012 AEJ was consulted by/sent policy recommendations to Council of Europe Secretariat and Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI); Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE); European Commission; European Parliament; OSCE and United Nations (UNESCO etc)
- 3) Other cooperation/Events with CoE Commissioner for Human Rights (new office-holder Nils Muiznieks from April 2012-; European Court of Human Rights; Access Info Europe; Centre for Freedom of the Media (UK University of Sheffield) etc

AEJ 2011 BUCHAREST CONGRESS Debates on MF Issues and attacks/jailings of journalists in Central & Eastern Europe & Turkey: See AEJ website, Euractiv coverage

TURKEY: AEJ VP Saiah Tsaousidou took part in EFJ-led delegation to campaign for release of Sener, Sik (now released) and approx 100 other journalists s in jail; several AEJ campaigns, coordinated with AEJ VP Dogan Tilic against imprisonment of journalists and Turkey’s repressive laws on media, terrosim etc

HUNGARY: AEJ supported Petition against new Media Laws , website coverage of negative assessments of Media laws by Council of Europe, OSCE etc

OSCE: Safety of Journalists Handbook by AEJ MF Rep was published in March 2012, commissioned by Lithuania’s OSCE Chairmanship (2011) and OSCE Rep on MF Dunja Mijatovic MF Rep, (in English and Russian – for copies ask joanna.jinks@osce.org)

MAJOR EVENTS:-

MAY 8 2012 – AEJ 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS, 13.00 to 15.00 on “IS THE EU COMPETENT FOR PRESS FREEDOM IN EUROPE?:- Media Freedom in the EU Member States and Croatia”

Event in EP, Brussels, marking AEJ's 50th year. Chaired by Eileen Dunne AEJ President; Speakers included Commissioner Neelie Kroes, W. Horsley, Renate Weber, Rapporteur for MF in the EP etc
AEJ MF Rep. presented Recommendations to European Commission and EP for better protections of MF (based on European Convention on Human Rights – ECHR)

- 1) Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to have mandate for monitoring press freedom
- 2) EU member states review EU laws and practices to confirm with the ECHR before/ as part of the process of EU accession to the ECHR
- 3) EU commits to active support for press freedom and journalists’ protection moves in the Council of Europe, OSCE and UN – in line with the Council of Europe Ministers’ Decision on “Media freedom” of 18 January 2012.

Follow-up:- Extensive coverage on AEJ websites and elsewhere;

W. Horsley contributed recommendations to the EU’s Centre for Media Freedom and Media Pluralism (European University Institute, Florence) ; the Centre’s Report on EU Competences for press freedom to be published on October 29 2012 (Florence)

AEJ offers input to Renate Weber’s Recommendations to the EP for “a big step forward” to “strengthen safeguards for press freedom in 7 EU member states. She cites heightened concerns about the new media laws in Hungary and the decline in media freedom in Italy, Bulgaria and Romania. Possible courses of action: monitoring, “backup intervention”, stronger self-regulation; EU legislation.

MAY 3 2012 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY:

Topical Events in various Sections – including Armenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Netherlands, Romania, Turkey and UK

Coverage on AEJ website

COUNCIL OF EUROPE – AEJ OBSERVER MEMBER OF (new) CDMSI – Steering Committee on Media and Information Society

Worked to ensure CoE focus & priority on:-

Improved protections for Article 10 (Freedom of Expression) – monitoring database; focus on “positive obligations” of Member States for media freedom and protection of journalists from violence and legal abuses (false imprisonment etc)

ANTI-TERRORISM LAW REVIEWS – National parliaments/governments to review Laws and practices – AEJ cooperation with EFJ and others; Council of Europe continued to fail to implement earlier pledges to tighten media-unfriendly anti-terrorism laws and practices

COUNCIL OF EUROPE – COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS “THEMATIC DEBATES” ON MEDIA

FREEDOM/SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS – December 2011 to March 28 2012

AEJ sent letters with proposals for tough Council of Europe actions to CoE Secretary-General Jagland; and to CoE Chairmanship (UK) in first half of 2012

Ref. Committee of Ministers <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1894923&Site=CM>

TEXT (EXTRACT):...In order to guarantee freedom of expression and information, called on member States to take all appropriate steps to ensure the protection of journalists, other media professionals and bloggers, both as regards preventive measures and effective investigation;

...Tasked the CDMSI to examine possible initiatives to be taken within the framework of the Council of Europe to strengthen this protection, taking into account the work conducted by other international organisations, as well as to foster ethical journalism, and to report back in due course.

2013 autumn CoE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, BELGRADE: Journalism and Internet issues: Open Internet, Media Freedom, Trust in Media; Media regulation and self-regulation -TBA

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY (PACE): William Horsley wrote Background Report, May 2012: “The State of Media Freedom in Europe”, assessment covering 2009-2012, in support of PACE Recommendation/Resolution in late 2012/early 2013. Delivered to PACE Assembly in Strasbourg, June 2012

SEE Council of Europe

LINK: http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/NewsManager/EMB_NewsManagerView.asp?ID=7785&L=2 (or google Horsley and “State of Media Freedom in Europe 2012”)

AEJ MF “MINI-SURVEY”: For AEJ Offida Congress, Sections prepared short “Issues-based MF Reports” for attention of Council of Europe: Armenia; Austria; Belarus; Bulgaria; Croatia; Romania; Serbia; Turkey; Ukraine, etc
Follow-up: To be published on website; responses awaited from Council of Europe

NEW TOPIC: UNITED NATIONS PLAN OF ACTION ON SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND THE ISSUE OF IMPUNITY – approved by United Nations in April 2012 see www.unesco.org (Communications and Info.) –

Follow-up: November 22-23 UN Inter-agency meeting in Vienna (UNESCO, UNDP, Office of High Commissioner for Human rights etc) + AEJ input into UN/UNESCO Implementation Strategy for the UN Action Plan (2012 to 2014)